

November 2021

# HARPER LIFE

JULY 1921



## HARPER ADAMS CLUB CENTENARY YEAR 1920 – 2020



JULY 2021

# Introduction from Club Presidents Simon Jones & Ros Barsley

Well, the Club's Centenary year hasn't quite worked out as we had imagined, but neither has anything else in the last year and a bit. The posh dinner at the Grand Hotel in Birmingham (where the Club was formed) had to be exchanged for an online virtual toast and the large party back at Harper was swapped for a socially distanced Annual lunch. All our plans flew right out of the window, someone left it wide open to aid ventilation.

Nevertheless, in true Harper Spirit, the Club has done the best with what we had, and managed to knock out a few events, a couple of newsletters and now this slimmed down Centenary edition of Harper Life. We hope you enjoy reading it and hopefully it will inspire you to attend an event next year or become more involved as we aim to reboot the Club and bring it in the 21st Century.

A lot has changed since around 40 ex-Harper students created the Club on the 30th November 1920, they had the horse drawn plough, Harper now has the Hands Free Hectare. We had the pleasure recently of visiting the new Veterinary Education Centre and meeting the University's new Vice Chancellor Professor Ken Sloan.

Some challenges lie ahead for us all, but just as many opportunities are around the corner too. We hope you will continue to support the Club but most importantly, please keep in touch.



The Harper Adams Club's year of Centenary celebrations kicked off during the lockdown when around 40 ex-students met online for a virtual toast to the Harper Adams Club. Original plans had been to head back to where it all started on the 30th November 1920, the Grand Hotel in Birmingham. However, exactly 100 years later, no one was allowed out.

After a welcome and a brief history of the Club by former Club President Simon Jones, the University Vice-Chancellor Dr David Llewellyn gave an insight to the Agricultural industry of the 1920's and the changes that UK agriculture and Harper Adams have witnessed over the last century. Following this Honorary Club Life President Ros Barsley, gave a toast celebrating the Harper Spirit and the unique bond shared amongst ex-Harper Students.

## Honorary Life Presidents Toast

Many thanks to all of you for joining us to mark this important milestone in the Clubs history.

Little would those 40 people gathered in the Grand Hotel in Birmingham, exactly one hundred years ago today; believe we would be meeting 'virtually' across the UK and beyond. They probably would not believe that Harper Adams was a University, that the campus had grown in such a manner and was home to the world's first hands-free hectare and now hands-free farm of 35 hectares.

They would be amazed to discover that Harper Adams was training Vets, Vet nurses, Surveyors, Engineers, Zoologists, Food technicians, conservationists, auctioneers and business managers to name a few. And training people from all over the world, including China, America, Australia, South Africa, Spain, France and even Inner Mongolia.

They would be astounded to learn that Club members and Scholars were building the world's fastest tractor, pioneering the growth of super foods from Peru, making world class gins, wines and beers and championing the conservation of our natural environment. But I am sure there is one thing they would believe...

You see, The Harper Adams Club is not a place, it does not begin and end at the borders of Edgmond, and it is not subjected to changes in technology or diversity in subject area. It is about people, and I am pretty sure that any one of us could walk into the Grand Hotel 100 years ago today and find at least one thing in common with that gathering of 40, the thing that binds us all together...the Harper Spirit.

So, in recognition of those that have gone before us, and those that will follow, it is my honour to raise a toast to something incredibly special to be part of... The Harper Adams Club!!

“

Any one of us could walk into the Grand Hotel 100 years ago today and find at least one thing in common with that gathering of 40, the thing that binds us all together... the Harper Spirit”

# HARPER AT 100 A ROUND UP OF CELEBRATIONS

## Harper Adams Club lunch and Campus Tour July 2021

Harper Adams Club Lunch 14th July 2021 saw 42 former students and 4 of this year's Scholarship recipients attend a lunch in QMH followed by a tour of the campus. After the pandemic cancelled the 2020 annual lunch, the Club Committee were determined that the 2021 Open Day would go ahead at Harper Adams on the 10th July.

Numbers were restricted for the lunch in QMH and every seat was taken in a strange set-up that abided by social distancing rules. The large Perspex screens separating each table did little to dampen the noise and usual rowdiness expected at any Harper reunion, with Club members ranging in age from 95 to 22 years.

Following a fantastic meal produced by the Catering Department, everyone took the short walk from QMH to the front of the Main Building, to recreate the infamous photograph taken on the Clubs first ever meet at Harper on the 21st July 1921.

A couple of tours were then available for all to see the recent developments and changes on campus. Afternoon tea rounded up a brilliant day of fun, friendship, blue skies and sunshine.



**SAVE THE DATE – THE HARPER ADAMS CLUB LUNCH WILL BE SATURDAY 18TH JUNE 2022**

We will be celebrating 50 years Golden entrants from 1972; 25 years Silver entrants from 1997 and 10 year Anniversary for entrants from 2012. All are welcome from whichever years you were at Harper.

# HARPER GOES LOCAL AT



## Kent

Hosted by Alice Whitehead.



## Newark

Hosted by Charlie Wright.



## Thirsk, Yorkshire

Hosted by John Ward, with 50 attendees – by far the largest gathering.



## Fifteen Glee Clubbers,

50 year reunion of Glee Club HND 1970-73, to celebrate 51 years since we met in Edmond, on the only wet weekend in August but a good time was had by all, with the usual banter and “Do you remember...”



## Hertfordshire

Organised by Lucy Goodman



**Alumni of '87, 88 and 89** met at the Rose & Crown in Kings Langley on 6th November.

After lunch spent we spent time renewing old friendships with a day of laughter followed with the 50 somethings showing they still had plenty of Harper Spirit! It was all too short but very sweet!

**Rona Amiss** hosted an event at Tregullus Farm in Cornwall – the most southerly farm on mainland Britain, which was attended by several alumni.

# Harper Adams Club Scholars 2020-21

The Harper Adams Club in its Centenary year is proud to announce the award of a record £11,000 in scholarships to eight worthy recipients. Fifteen shortlisted students were interviewed from a healthy seventy applications, indicating much demand.

The prestigious **Postgraduate Scholarship** was won by **Georgina Wager**, studying an MSc in Data Science for Global Agriculture, Food and Environment. As Agriculture graduate Georgina is able to combine her passion for numbers and animal production and we envisage her having a pivotal role in not only analysing complex data, but also by having the skills to practically interpret and communicate the implications of the findings of such data, to benefit the wider farming community.

Sparky former Harper Forum chair and 2020 Farmers Weekly Student of the Year runner-up, **Emily Jones**, studying BSc Agri-business, gained the **Final Year Scholarship**. Emily describes Harper as a unique family like institution which has inspired her to gain confidence and grow as a person, while her Safety Revolution placement has fostered an ambition to be at the forefront in a concerted effort to improve farm safety and mental health.

The long established **Entry Foundation Degree Scholarship** was awarded to **Evie Rogers**, who has progressed onto the BSc Agriculture with Animal Science course. Evie credits Harper for providing her with a gateway into the industry despite not being from a farming background and a renewed motivation for learning, in contrast to her A levels.

The Club's **Animal and Veterinary Sciences Scholarship**, in its second year, after identifying an urgent need in this subject area, attracted the most applicants and was won by **Sophie Cummings**, studying BSc Veterinary Nursing with Small Animal Rehabilitation. After adapting rapidly on placement to the fast paced environment at leading veterinary specialists, Dick White Referrals and securing a future job offer there, Sophie demonstrated to us a determined focus to pursue a career in emergency critical care.

To celebrate one hundred years of the Harper Adams Club, an additional **Centenary Scholarship** was this year offered, whereby applicants were invited to answer a choice of two questions related to how they might build on their own Harper legacy.

The worthy inaugural Centenary Scholar is engaging **Emma Jones**, studying BSc Agriculture with Crop Management, who claims to have been quiet in the past but has maximised her potential academically and extracurricular wise and described a sense of belonging as soon as she first visited campus. Emma exudes enthusiasm for her budding agronomy career, whilst holding an ambition to help educate the next generation.

In order to reflect the high standard of students interviewed, The Club also awarded three additional discretionary **President's Scholarships** to **Isobel Eames** (BSc Agriculture with Crop Management), **Chloe Gimson** (BSc Agriculture with Farm Business Management) and **Rosie Dymond** (BSc Veterinary Physiotherapy).

Isobel was proud to be elected Lioness Captain this year and plans to return to the family beef farm, while acting on her crusade to combat miscommunication about agriculture and to promote sustainable British produce to the public using her social media following and through the NFU.

Chloe's placement performance at Barnham Poultry was recognised as the best on her course and she has developed a keen interest in conveying where our food comes from via Ladies in Pigs. She has recently secured a sought after graduate position at Savills.

Rosie is targeting a second first class degree, having followed a winding path in order to realise her vocation for treating working and sporting dogs and hopes to combine this with the sense of fulfilment she receives from teaching others in her discipline.

**Since awarding its first scholarship in 2001, The Harper Adams Club has had the honour of distributing over £115,000 in scholarships and awards. It was an enormous pleasure to interview this year and The Club extends sincere thanks to the many who have donated over the years to make this all possible.**

“Fifteen shortlisted students were interviewed from a healthy seventy applications, indicating much demand”

# Meet your new Committee members—

## **Ed Cooper BSc (Hons) Agric 1992-96**

Following in the footsteps of my two elder brothers, William (1986-1990) and James (1989-1993) we're a farming family of Harper graduates, who were always encouraged to pursue our goals in further education. From my first visit to the 6th form conference at 16 I knew Harper was for me.

Having unexpectedly made it on the degree course, I went with the motto "Here for a good time not a long time!" Proudly gaining 2:1 degree and going on to gain BASIS in Crop Protection ICM & FACTS. I quickly recognised the importance of these professional qualifications, having met crop protection postgraduates whilst at college & starting to work with agronomists as postgraduate.

All 3 qualifications have served me well in a 25 year career that has spanned crop production, nutrition, agronomy and crop sales and advice.

After a short while in a post graduate position on Buccleuch Estates in the Selkirk, I returned to Lincolnshire and made it my home for the past 20 plus years. I'm amazed how many Harper graduates I continue to meet in the agricultural and related industry I work and socialise in. I live on The Osberton Estate in East Notts with my partner and children and work as Area Business Manager in Lincs/Notts/Yorks for advanced crop nutrition manufacturer and retailer Ilex Envirosiences.

I promote and advise on the rapidly expanding use of bio stimulants and multi-nutrients in crop production, as the global crop production enters a new era of production to feed a continuously growing population more responsibly and sustainably; using bio agronomy techniques as the knowledge and understanding of biological and nutritional products increases, as well as technological advancements in digital agronomy and applications.

## **Charlotte Playfair-Hannay**

I live in the Scottish Borders where my husband Rob and I farm on a mixed farm with the rest of his family. We met at Harper Adams, and were both there from 2004-08. I am also a Rural Surveyor for a National Conservation Charity. In my spare time I have two horses that keep me busy.

## **Jeff White**

Jeff was educated at Coleraine Academical Institution (CAI), Belfast Royal Academy and Sandhurst Military College. In 1966 he attended Loughry Agricultural College, Ireland and then Harper Adams (NDP1968-1970).

In 1982, he was selected for officer training in the Territorial Army (TA) and in 1983 he attended the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, where he was awarded the Queen's Commission (Royal Artillery).

In civilian life, Jeff in conjunction with the DTI, helped the creation of a Business Link in Somerset, with Major General Pat Lee CBE. Following the successful bid and implementation of this Business Link organization, in 1998, he was then asked to take responsibility for achieving DTI's Business Link National Accreditation status in Investors in People, ISO 9000 and Total Quality Assurance.

Following that venture he then became an auditor and National Assessor for SGS (UK) in ISO9000 (2). He lives with Sue in an old farmhouse in North Devon.

## **Alice Whitehead (BSc Hons Agriculture 2009-2013)**

Alice is an agronomist working for Zantra Ltd based in Kent. Alice has recently joined Zantra this year, after working for leafy salads producer Intercrop Ltd since graduation (and during placement).

She has a specialism in vegetables, leafy salads and protected crops. Interests include playing hockey and walking dogs.

These Alumni have all been voted onto the Club's committee to join the existing Committee opposite.

### **Ros Barsley HND Agriculture 1970-73 Joint Harper Adams Club President**

Member of Harper Adams Club Committee for many years and Founder member of Development Trust at Harper Adams. Now happily retired, married to Richard Barsley (HND Agriculture 1971-74) for 47 years and have two daughters, four grandsons and one granddaughter.

Pre-pandemic spent many happy months each year travelling around UK and Europe in our motorhome – hoping to resume in 2022.

### **Simon Jones BSc (Hons) REP 1996-2000 Joint Harper Adams Club President and Trustee of HAU Development Trust**

After graduating I spent a brief spell in consultancy before being tempted back to Harper to deliver on reach-out activity, lecture and be the Placement Manager for the Countryside and Environment courses.

In 2005 I escaped Edgmond to take on a whole new personal challenge, developing my own leisure and tourism business in South Nottinghamshire. I have been an active supporter of the Harper Adams Club for well over 20 years and have served as Club President twice before.

In my spare time I love tackling mountain sports. I am a keen snowboarder, skier, mountain climber and trail runner and have recently started competing in Ultra marathons.

### **Sarah Furniss BSc (Hons) Agriculture with Land & Farm Management (1998-2002)**

Having spent my placement year with Andersons Farm Business Consultants in Melton Mowbray, I decided that I wanted a career helping businesses understand their finances.

After graduating from Harper, I spent the summer working on my family's dairy farm in North Wales before starting an Institute of Chartered Accountants training contract with Howard Worth, an Agricultural Specialist Accountancy Business in Cheshire.

After qualifying as a Chartered Accountant, I married Paul Furniss (NHD Agriculture 1998-2001) and moved back to Newport. We have two young girls who keep us on our toes.

I am now back at Harper Adams as a member of staff working within the finance department as Resources and Financial Planning Manager.

### **Alex Law 1999-2003 BSc (Hons) Agriculture with Land and Farm Management, 2006-07 MSc Rural Environment and Land Management**

I live in the Yorkshire Dales on a small hill farm with my wife Ele and son Henry. Having been on the Harper Adams Club Committee since 2006, I have served as President and attended most events across the country from my home in North Yorkshire.

I currently work for Carrs Billington Agriculture, managing the sales and support of all Seeds, Pesticides and Crop Additives across the UK.

### **Victoria Stead 2011-15 BSc Countryside Environment Management, 2015-17 MSc Integrated Pest Management**

# YOUR HARPER LIFE —

Reminiscences of student experiences over the years – if you would like to submit something or know of someone who we should include in the next edition of Harper Life, please send it to:

**thearperadamsclub@gmail.com**

## Your Harper Life... An interview with **Keith Stevens** NDA 1954-56



### **When did you attend Harper Adams and what did you study?**

I studied the two year National Diploma in Agriculture from 1954-56 under the Principal WT Price, which was one of only two courses offered, along with the National Diploma in Poultry.

### **Who were your best friends at Harper and did you keep in touch?**

I still keep in touch with my close friend Gerard Poulter and we meet most years at the Harper Alumni Dinner, most recently in 2021, to celebrate the Club's Centenary.

Another friend Ian Reekie, after leaving Harper, enrolled at Nottingham to study Agriculture Engineering (not yet offered at Harper) and met my sister as a fellow student and later married her!

### **What adventures did you and your fellow students get up to?**

1955 was an election year and we decided the local constituency proceedings between the two main parties needed livening up.

Therefore we introduced a budding English Nationalist candidate, Tommy Bates, to the campaign trail and helped him gather crowds of listeners around the local towns.

I am not sure the electorate liked what they heard though as he ultimately failed to raise the £150 deposit to make it onto the ballot paper and turned out to be more suited to being a bookie!

For my sins I was elected RAG secretary in Autumn 1955 and presided over the largest RAG yet held.

### **What did you do after Harper?**

I ran my small farm in Acton Trussell, near Stafford for the next 60 years focussing on pork from large white sows until the upset caused by the devastating foot and mouth outbreak in 1967-68.

I then concentrated on potatoes and latterly a busy pick your own strawberry enterprise.

Meanwhile as a freelancer at BBC Radio Stoke, I worked on their farming and other programmes from the month of its opening in March 1968 until 2002 and also wrote for local newspapers on farming matters.

For many years I wrote monthly for The Farmer magazine, that is, until COVID put a sudden end to freelance work.

### **What are your other significant achievements?**

In 1968 as a Staffordshire Young Farmer I was elected national chairman of the NFYFC and represented young farmers at the British Youth Council, becoming its chairman too.

### **What does Harper Adams mean to you?**

Friends, knowledge and understanding gained at Harper have carried me through my life ever since.

## Your Harper Life... An interview with **A M Tabassum** **NDP 1959-1960**



Mr A M Tabassum was born in British India in 1931, migrating to Pakistan following the partition of India in 1947. He moved to Saudi Arabia in 1952, leaving in 1959 to begin his studies at Harper Adams. Now living in Nottingham with his family, 'Tab' enjoys writing poetry and compiling books. The name 'Tabassum' means 'smile-happiness' and it is very well suited to this marvelous gentleman.

### **When did you attend Harper Adams and what course did you study?**

I arrived at Newport railway station in 1959 where Harper Adams had commissioned a taxi to take me to my lodgings in Edgmond. I studied the National Diploma in Poultry.

### **Why did you choose to go to Harper?**

While I was living in Saudi Arabia I planned to move back to Pakistan and start poultry farming. I sought out opportunities to get training in England, so I contacted my Embassy, who introduced me to Harper.

### **Did you live on campus, if so, where?**

No, I lived in lodgings in Edgmond, never on campus.

### **Who was your favourite lecturer/member of staff and why?**

I liked everyone and felt so at home at Harper. I couldn't pick a favourite, it was such a wonderful time.

### **What is the happiest/most memorable/iconic memory of your time at Harper?**

While working in Saudi Arabia I had saved some money, I was young, unmarried, and enjoying my life. I arrived at Harper four days before the college opened and was given an extraordinary reception by everyone.

Two days later I learned that a local newspaper had announced that an African Prince was joining the college that year. A Prince I was not, but treated like one I was, for all my time at Harper. I became most popular at Harper and built some great friendships.

Everyone made me feel at home and that is something I will never forget. I often live there in my imagination. I often relive those moments in my memory.

### **What adventures did you and your fellow students get up to?**

In one of the variety shows at Harper I was the main character; I came on the stage and not many people knew about it because I kept it a secret. I came on and treated the students to a tale about two things to worry about.

After I finished the hall was banging and clapping for 10 minutes and following that the phrase 'two things to worry about' became popular by everyone including lecturers who used it in their lectures. I also performed a magic show and ended up taking a £10 pound note off the Principle, Mr. Price, in a trick I had organized with two lecturers. I did return it to him the following day!

At the end they picked me up on their shoulders and were chanting "He's a jolly good fellow". I panicked, I thought they were going to undress me and throw me in the trough... thankfully they didn't. I have such sweet memories of being there.

### **How did Harper help you in your occupation/work/life?**

Harper helped me enormously. I returned to Pakistan to farm but the death of my father hit me hard that returning to England and my friend from Harper was the best option.

If it wasn't for Harper I wouldn't have built my life and family here in England.

### **What is your greatest achievement?**

Making such great friends with my time at Harper, the time spent there was so sweet and so special.

### **Who were your best friends at Harper and did you keep in touch?**

I met some really good friends but it's a shame that, in time, I lost contact with them. One of my best friends was John McBride from Ireland.

### **What did you do after Harper?**

In 1960 I returned to Pakistan and started a small farm but my father died in 1961, I was uprooted and I lost interest in everything so I returned to England.

I went to stay with an old farming friend who I had met at Harper and then worked in a variety of jobs including being a railway guard and booking office manager.

I worked for Boots for 12 years in their head office, a company called MACSACK before returning to Nottingham with IBM then finally Rentokil as Senior Credit Controller.

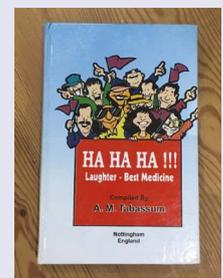
### **What does Harper Adams mean to you?**

Harper Adams means so much to me, from all aspects. It was a sort of newness being alone among white people although it never occurred to me and they never made me feel that I was any different.

I was readily accepted by everyone, I learnt so much, including the meaning of comradeship, and recognized light-heartedness and tolerance.

### **What advice would you give to today's Harper student?**

They should remember what they are there for, never forget why they are there, and build the foundations for the rest of their lives.





## THE HARPER ADAMS CLUB WELCOMES THE NEWLY APPOINTED VICE CHANCELLOR, PROFESSOR KEN SLOAN

I am delighted to have been appointed as the new Vice-Chancellor of Harper Adams University. I return to the UK from Melbourne, Australia where I was at Monash University for five years. Prior to that I was at the University of Warwick for almost twenty years.

Having grown up on the Wirral and worked in Coventry and Warwickshire for a long period, the A41 through Shropshire was a constant route and I have enjoyed visiting and staying in many towns and villages over the years. It is a privilege to now be able to call this beautiful county my home.

My predecessor, Dr David Llewellyn, left a fantastic legacy and Harper is clearly valued and

respected both locally, nationally, and increasingly, internationally. Harper's strength lies in the quality and relevance of its teaching and research, the talent and enthusiasm of its students, and the relationships we have with industry partners, government, external organisations and our alumni. Thank you for the friendship and support that you continue to give to Harper. The future will be challenging but it will also bring opportunities for innovation and excitement. I will always welcome your contributions and ideas for our future and look forward to developing links with students past and present.

**Professor Ken Sloan, Vice-Chancellor**

## HARPER ADAMS UNIVERSITY CHANCELLOR, HRH THE PRINCESS ROYAL, RETURNED TO THE CAMPUS IN JUNE TO LAUNCH A DEVELOPMENT THAT WILL SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCE VETERINARY TEACHING.

Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal, Chancellor, officially opened the Veterinary Education Centre, which serves students of the Harper & Keele Veterinary School and Harper Adams University.

The centre is packed with facilities and equipment required to educate veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses, veterinary physiotherapists and other future veterinary professionals.

Vice-Chancellor at the time, Dr David Llewellyn, said: "We were delighted to be able to welcome The Princess Royal back to Harper Adams to officially open the Veterinary Education Centre. This is a major new facility for the University and will not only support the education of those entering a variety of veterinary professions, but will also enable us, through the work of the Vet School, to ensure future generations of veterinary surgeons are able to train alongside those seeking a career in the agri-food industry."



# News of old students—

## Henry Burrows REALM 2008-2012

I married Kelly Lawrence on 24th October last year just before we all went back into lockdown again. This was a last minute, small scale wedding due to Covid after postponing the original 'larger scale' wedding from May 2020, to August 2020, then again to May 2021, then deciding to just go ahead and get married in compliance with the maximum 15 numbers.

The slightly unique thing about our wedding, other than Covid restrictions, was our pet sheep 'Buddy' was our ring bearer for the wedding and did a sterling job of carrying the ring up the church aisle. We then had a small wedding reception afterwards back home at my parent's farmhouse.



## Kate Ody Rural Environmental Protection 1996-2000

Kate Ody got engaged to New Zealander Andrew Metherell on February 7th 2021. Pictured, below, with Andrew and their 2 year old daughter Emily.



## Frances Cooper REALM 2006-10

I graduated from Harper Adams (REALM) back in 2010 and have recently written a piece for an Australian blog on my take of farming in Central Australia and how I think knowledge I gained from my degree can be applied in Central Australian beef farming as well as in the UK.

I'm not sure if it is of interest to you but I thought it may be nice for you to see what a member of Harper Adams alumni is up to now and that everything learnt at Harper can be transferred anywhere in the world.

Thanks, Frances Cooper.



Aussie farmers can't make it rain ☁️ BUT there are other things they are doing to prepare for, and manage, drought.

For Fran Cooper (pictured), working on Mt Riddock Station in Australia's red centre has been nothing short of an eye opener.

Read about what they are doing here:  
<https://wp.me/p3sLjQ-5Bt>

<https://wp.me/p3sLjQ-5Bt>



### **James and Rebecca Townley (nee Lund)**

Our wedding that took place in Southwell, Nottinghamshire on 16th October 2021.

Rebecca studied BSc (Hons) Food, Nutrition and Well-being (2011-15) and met James at Harper who studied MEng Agricultural Engineering (2011-15).

We shared self-catering halls in first year, Darwin A. We also have a son, Jonathan, who was born on 4th July 2021.

We live in County Down, Northern Ireland.

### **Peter and Laura Boocock (nee Arrandale)** got married on the 4th September 2021.

Both graduated in 2012, Laura studied BSc Veterinary Nursing and Practice Management and Peter studied BEng Engineering Design and Development.

### **Poppy Arnett Country and Land Management 2004-08**

I graduated in 2008 and have since held various roles for agricultural organisations across the South West. In March 2019 I headed to East Yorkshire on a 3 month secondment from the NFU TB team, picking up the role of the NFU County Adviser. The secondment was extended to 5 months and then permanently! Surrounded by old friends, my Harper connections made it home from home, as well as the beautiful countryside and welcoming farming community.

In the autumn, I met Ben, who did an Ag Engineering apprenticeship at Askham Bryan and now runs his own agri service business.

In December 2020 we welcomed Digby into the world, who is lucky enough to have a Harper baby best friend just up the road – daughter of Jane (and John) Armitage (née Thornberry) and lots of Harper baby friends across the country.

### **Caroline Cavill**

I am an MSc REALM graduate and I now chair RICS Rural APC panels I also run APC Achieve – **APCAchieve.com** – providing coaching services to individuals and firms to support candidates towards their final chartered submission and interview.

I can help with submission documents, case studies, mock questions and interview practice. I love helping APC candidates – especially the Harper ones!

I can be found on Facebook and Twitter too!

### **David Recchia** attended Harper Adams from 2011-15 BSc Hons countryside management and my new wife, **Kate (nee McSkimming)** from 2013-17 BSc Hons Veterinary Physiotherapist.

We got married this July in Loch Lomond with a good number of Harper alumni and our families.

I have been working for Forestry England for the last five years. Initially in the Forest of Dean, then the Lake District and now in North Yorkshire as a wildlife Ranger managing deer, wild boar and protected species. Kate worked as a veterinary physiotherapist at Glasgow vet school for 3 and half years before moving to Yorkshire and taking up a job lecturing in Animal Management at Askham Bryan College.



**Gail Gribble (nee Shrubsall)**

I was at Harper Adam's studying Agri-Business 2010-14, I have recently got married and am now Mrs Gail Gribble, working in position of Senior Technical Account Manager at Berry Gardens and living with my husband Mr Robert Gribble on the family farm in Sussex.



**William Heginbotham and Samantha Jeakins**

Married on July 10, 2021. Both starting Harper in 2011, both enjoyed a fantastic experience at university culminated in when they moved in next door to each other on their final year and the relationship began soon after.



**Becca McLean** married **Pete Woodford** (both at Harper 2009-13) on 21st August 2021 after a year of delay due to Covid.

**Emma-Louise Bates** married **Sam Earnshaw** in June this year (both Harper students who graduated in 2014).

**Mary Evans** (class of 2015, business management with marketing student) married **David Perry** (Ag student) on the 20th August 2021.

Dave works for manufacturer Kverneland, he lived around Shropshire all his life and I am from North Wales, never thought I would move to Shropshire and here I am, living in Prees!



**Frankie Howie (Johnson)** and **Will Howie** got married on 24th July 2021 in Northumberland! We went to Harper 2007-11.



**Sarah Colin-Stokes** married **George Nevill** in May 2021 after having cancelled in 2020 because of Covid. It was a double Harper wedding, we met in Freshers Week 2011.

George studied BEng Agricultural Engineering and Sarah studied FdSc Veterinary Nursing.

**Roger Pearson 1952-54**

Greetings from the 'far West of Canada', Vancouver. I still see and stay with Cedric Hill who became a long-time friend.

He and his wife Boo are great friends who have hosted my wife, Marie and I, on every holiday we have had in England since coming to Canada in 1955. I am proud to be an Alumnus of a university now.

**Anne Smith (nee Robson) 1956-58**

Some of my Harper Memories and other matters.

It is July 2021 and we are at last endeavouring to ease out of the 'final' Covid-19 lock-down towards a more normal life – we live in hope!

The past 18 months has been difficult for everyone but Harper students will probably feel they have been robbed of so much of the fun of life on Campus. I was born in 1937 on a mixed family farm in North Yorkshire and during the war years life was hard, but there was a strong community spirit and we didn't have to isolate from one another.

How life at Harper has changed since I was there when the only girl students were those studying for the National Diploma in Poultry Husbandry, about 35 girls in my time.

The girls lived in Edgmond House and Ancellor House – the original home of Thomas Harper Adams the founding father of agricultural education and the college.

For my two years at Harper I was lucky to live in Ancellor House, we had our own garden, our own House Keeper who was also an excellent cook, and our own maids.

Our live-in Warden was Doc Mac, she made sure we were in by 10pm and followed all the rules if we were to avoid being 'gated'.

In my second year I was elected onto the Students' Union Committee as the girl's representative, the experience stood me in good stead for the many committees with which I would become involved during my professional career.

I can look back on my Harper years with many happy memories and lasting friendships and with gratitude for launching me into a rewarding career in the Poultry Industry – NAAS, ADAS and the NFU.

I am still in touch with nearly all my Harper friends who are scattered far and wide, including Canada and New Zealand, and over the years I have visited them all and they me.

The Covid pandemic may well be a wake up call for our over populated planet and humanity, so much had become unsustainable. There are many difficult issues to face, what with climate change and the need to balance care of the environment with food production – exciting and challenging times ahead for the Harper students of the future.

In my retirement I am lucky to live in a village on the banks of the river Tees, not far from the family farm where I was born. I still walk a lot, garden a lot, drive quite long distances and do a family school run.

My extended farming family keep me up to date on the many challenges they are facing in the arable and livestock sectors, while the young ones try to keep me up to speed with IT and modern communications.

Each year I look forward to receiving my copy of Harper Life with all the news, and will continue to do so until I eventually fall off my perch.

With best wishes to all.

**Tim Williams 1980-82**

I was on the poultry OND course back in 1980-82. Recently I have been working the last 3 years in Saudi Arabia running 2 hatcheries for Almarai. Hope I can catch up with some of the guys after all these years!

**Howard Evans 1986-89**

Had a fantastic time at Harper Adams Agricultural College studying on the HND Agricultural Marketing and Business Administration course back in 1986-89.

What an amazing university to have the opportunity to follow one of a wide range of courses in the 2020s!

Just wondering how many alumni are currently Deputy Headteachers in Secondary schools!

Farming in my blood – still helping out on a local farm and own 4.5 acres of plantation/Semi Natural Ancient Woodland near Cross Hands in South Wales.

**Philippa (Pip) Smith**

After a period of semi pro yacht racing (pre kids) and a number of fix term contracts in conservation after my youngest started school in 2018 December 2019 I started as a project officer with the Essex office of The Conservation Volunteers (Formally BTCV).

Love my job which gives the perfect work life balance as a single parent and an eclectic mix of volunteers which range from a retired Professor of English and French literature to special needs adults particularly those on the autism spectrum, but a lovely gang.

I am still sailing mad owning my own mirror dinghy and crewing when I get a chance!

I have two pickles Abigail 9 who wants to be a vet when she is older and Daniel 6 who is tractor and digger mad so nudging him that maybe he would like to be a tractor and digger designer (and apply for a JCB Scholarship at Harper).

## Tavernor Family

John Tavernor attended Harper Adams in 1938-39 but spent his 2nd year at Reading as a result of special arrangement put in place because of the outbreak of the second World War. These were described by Dr Heater Williams in 'the Lure of the Land'.

"In the summer of 1939 there were rumours that the Harper Adams would be closing down...all agricultural education institutions, with the exception of Reading University and the women's colleges of Studley and Swanley were to close for the instruction of students in agriculture and were to concentrate on the provision of short courses, essentially practical in outlook, intended to qualify inexperienced recruits for agricultural labour – namely the Land Army".

"On the belated discovery that Reading could not provide the needs if the poultry diploma NIPH at Harper was made the national provider for poultry education".

John returned to Harper Adams as Farm Bailiff in 1942 where he met Brenda and they married in 1950 and since then eight members of the extended Tavernor family have attended Harper Adams.

John was President of the Harper Adams Club in 1964-65.



*John Tavernor (1938-39 and farm staff 1942-43) and Brenda Tavernor (Willy, 1943-45)*

## The Tavernor Family Reunion of the descendants John and his 3 brothers in August 2021 included many Harper ex/future-students



Seated:

**Nick Tavernor, Brenda (nee Willy) Tavernor (1943-45), June (nee Dorey) Tavernor, Peter Tavernor**

Standing:

**Henry Thorpe, Suzanna (nee Layton-Busch) Thorpe, Vida Thorpe (starts in 2022!), Donna (nee Tavernor) Simmons, Jack Tavernor**

Box on left:

**Emily (nee Tavernor) and Ed Plumb**

# Obituaries—



**Professor Simon Leather BSc MBiol Hon.FRES PhD,  
Professor Emeritus at Harper Adams University**

We are very sad to report the death of Professor Simon Leather who passed peacefully on 29th September 2021. He will be dearly missed by his friends, colleagues and students.

Simon Leather had a childhood interest in insects and was educated at King George V School (Hong Kong) and Ripon Grammar School. He studied BSc Agricultural Zoology at the University of Leeds, graduating in 1977; and a PhD on the ecology of the bird cherry oat aphid at the University of East Anglia, graduating in 1980.

He was a Royal Society postdoctoral fellow in Finland, working on the bird cherry oat aphid, he moved back to UEA and then worked at the Forestry Commission.

In the early 1990s he moved the Silwood Park campus of Imperial College London to be a lecturer, rising to Reader in Applied Ecology, in 2012 Simon moved to Harper Adams University to be Professor of Entomology.

Leather did extensive research into integrated pest management of insect pests in agriculture, horticulture and forestry and he was a member of the UK government's Tree Health and Plant Biosecurity Taskforce. His work on aphids includes the discovery in pea aphids of cannibalistic behaviour.

Leather has also carried out research in urban ecology, looking at the biodiversity value of roundabouts for over 10 years in Bracknell Forest.

He was an advocate of the need for specialist training in entomology and taxonomy and before his move to Harper Adams University was concerned that his then unique (in the UK) Masters courses in Entomology, Integrated Pest Management and Plant Pathology would cease on his eventual retirement.

In 2009 he coined the phrase 'institutional vertebratism' to describe the bias of scientific research funding to vertebrate animals, rather than the more numerous invertebrates.

In 2013 he started a personal blog 'Don't forget the roundabouts'. He talked and wrote about new platforms for non-academic science communication that are available online.



## Peter Bloxham

It is with great sadness that we have to announce that Peter Bloxham passed away peacefully on 9 October.

Peter Bloxham joined Harper Adams in 1986 as Principal Lecturer in Agricultural Engineering, subsequently becoming Head of Engineering, before taking early retirement from the University College in August 1999.

Following his retirement Peter became Harper Adams's representative in China, developing important partnerships including Beijing Agricultural University, Huazhong University and China Agricultural University.

Peter was awarded Fellowship of the University College in 2011 in recognition of his work in promoting and representing the University College's interests in China, and in forging new relationships with Chinese institutions, including the Ministry of Agriculture; partner universities; UK Government representatives in China; and UK and Chinese businesses.

Equal to his passion and commitment to Stoke City Football Club, Peter was a Harper Adams man through and through.



## John Wright

A lasting legacy in memory of a Harper Adams University alumnus will help to encourage the next generation of postgraduate students at the institution.

After John Wright passed away, his will made clear he wished to support students at Harper Adams University – where he himself had studied in the 1950s. That wish is now set to be honoured through an MSc Scholarship – backed with match funding from the John Oldacre Foundation. The new award was introduced after John's niece, Wendy Bill, contacted the university, where she spoke with Doris Taylor, Head of Development at the Harper Adams Development Trust.

The trust helps offer a range of scholarship opportunities for students who have secured places on the university's degree programmes and works to ensure the next generation of talent in the agri-food and rural business sectors receive support.

Mrs Taylor said: "Following Wendy contacting the university, I explored ways with her to ensure her late uncle's wishes were followed – and as a result, she made a donation on his behalf to the Harper Adams Club to support postgraduate awards, something he felt particularly strongly about. After discussions, we decided between us to offer a John Oldacre Foundation MSc Scholarship, match funded by the legacy of Alumnus John Wright, through the Harper Adams Club".

"The scholarship will draw upon an award from the John Oldacre Foundation, which awarded £1m to the University a few years ago. This fund – through investment – provides funding for scholarships which require match funding from other charities or industry partners".

Wendy – who still lives in Earlswood, in Warwickshire, where John farmed – and her cousin, Julie Mitchinson, came to Harper Adams. During their visit, they met with staff from the University's Development Trust, including Mrs Taylor, as well as University Secretary Catherine Baxter and Harper Adams Joint President and Honorary Life President Ros Barsley to hear more about the work being carried out at Harper Adams – and the good use their uncle's legacy would be put to.

Wendy said: "We came here because my uncle was passionate about postgraduate study, and he loved Harper Adams. His time here meant so much to him – he used to read the magazine the University sent out and talk about the people he remembered. He came to the university from the family farm in Earlswood in the fifties and had fond memories of his studies at Harper."

**To find out more about the Harper Adams Development Trust and its work, please [click here](#).**

**Rachel Nightingale  
(née Marsland) BSc Agriculture  
1995-99, Student Union  
President 1999-2000**

If there was ever anyone who embodied the unofficial Harper motto of 'work hard, play hard' it was Rachel. Born into a large Yorkshire farming family, she was always going to choose agriculture, and arrived at Harper in 1995.

From her first minute on campus, she threw herself into college life, getting involved with many different sports and activities, making numerous friends, and never wasting a single opportunity to make the most of her time there.

After graduation, she took on the role of Student Union President and brought her considerable leadership talents to the job, always lifting up those around her with her warm and generous nature and contributing to all aspects of Harper life in her inimitable style.

It was during her time as President that she met her future husband Will Nightingale (BSc Agriculture 1999-2003).

They quickly fell in love and were inseparable for the rest of their lives together. For those of us who were privileged enough to be close friends with them at Harper, watching their

relationship develop over the years, and seeing everything they achieved together was incredibly special.

After Will graduated from Harper in 2003, they both took the huge decision to move to Western Australia, settling near the town of Wyalkatchem a few hours from Perth. As she did at Harper, Rachel threw herself into her new life there, taking on many different community roles over the years, always helping those around her, making them laugh with her mischievous sense of humour, and making friends wherever she went.

In 2005 a group of us ex-Harper students went out to Australia for their wedding, and it was wonderful to see how they'd already become such a central and much-loved part of the community there.

Of all Rachel's many remarkable achievements though, what she was most proud of were her children, Harry and Lauren. She was a loving and devoted Mother and was never happier than when she was with Will and the children at home, or on one of the many memorable adventures they all had together.

Following her tragic death on 5 April 2021 whilst working on the farm, an acknowledgement was made by the Parliament of Western Australia of her vast contribution

to the electorate, and this was an incredible testament to Rachel's commitment to the people of her community.

For those of us family and friends who were fortunate enough to have had Rachel in our lives, things will never be the same without her, and we'll always miss her terribly – but we'll always smile when we think of her and the many good times we all shared together. She truly was the best of us all.

Will Evans (HND Ag 1999-2002).



**Bernard McCaffrey N.D.P. 1964-66** has died after a short illness on 20/1/2021 at age 75. At college he was a keen footballer playing for the first 11, after leaving the college he went to work for a Shaver breeding Franchise producing the shaver 288 star cross.

He joined Ross Breeding company, and latterly before retirement worked for Country Fresh Pullets. He lived near Malpas in Cheshire on land he purchased; his son now breeds prize winning Texel sheep.

David Chadwick.

**John Hilderley HND Ag 1970-73**

John was a well-known and respected farmer from Staffordshire who attended Harper from 1970-73 as part of the HND group who, on leaving Harper, formed the Glee Club. He was an active and regular attendee at the Glee Club reunions and had a dry wit and unique sense of humour.

In 1972 he was part of a small group of students who took a piano round local town centres where they sang Old Time Music Hall songs to collect money for rag. The problem of how to move the piano from town to town was soon solved by John who commandeered his farm pick-up.

As our singing efforts were sometimes on the fringe of legality we sometimes had to leave town rather suddenly and John was our very competent get-away driver.

It was while he was at Harper that John met Anne, who was to become his wife. Later, as John fell ill, Anne cared for him devotedly whilst John bore his illness with courage, fortitude and good humour.

## David Bayne HND Agriculture 1977

It is with sadness and regret that I write to inform you of the death of David Bayne HND Agriculture 1977-1980 (Pre-entry 1976-77).

David died on Saturday 21st August last, after a short battle with cancer. His funeral took place at Manchester Crematorium on Tuesday 7th September 2021 at 14:30.

Former Harper students present were: Phil Barber (1976-79), Simon Morton, Allan Goddard, Nick Jones, Chris Whitby, Richard Morrey, Mike Yeats, David Fern and Charlie Mason (all HND Agrics 1977-1980).

The following were represented by those present: Becky Sherman (née Sessions), Dick Craig, Neil (Jock) Crighton, Robert (Bobby) Burton, Dave Hutton, Andrew Hawkins, Nick Bradley, John Walker, Chris Whitton, Guy Longbottom, Peter Brown and Rob Gething.

David was a larger-than-life character, who was everyone's friend and never took life too seriously. He leaves us with many fond memories and will be sorely missed by his family and all who knew him.

Charlie Mason HND Agriculture 1977-1980.



## Jake van Poortvliet

Jake was a pre-entry with me on 1994 then went on to Agriculture in 1995.

It is with absolute total shock and disbelief that I learn of the sad and utterly untimely passing of Jake van Poortvliet.

To anyone privileged enough to have met Jake, he was the heart and soul of Holt Rugby Club, an absolute pillar in this family and friendly community.

Motor Neurone Disease is the most cruel and evil disease.

My heart goes out to all my friends at the club and my deepest condolences to Jake's family.

Philippa Mays.



## Bobbles, the Harper cat (2003-2021)

For many years the Harper Adams farm had a feral cat colony that produced a regular output of kittens, whether they were needed or not!

In 2003 there was a concerted effort to take control of the situation. Staff from the newly established vet nursing department set about capturing and neutering adult cats and rehoming the kittens.

So 'Bobbles' came into our lives, small, lively and completely untamed. She was born in the old farm buildings, now the Regional Food Academy, and lured with her brothers into captivity. Hissing, spitting, yowling and growling she was not impressed by her imprisonment.

On arriving at her new home, she promptly escaped and disappeared under the floorboards of our top floor farmhouse flat for three days.

Recapture involved dismantling the landlord's bathroom below (they were away on holiday and never found out), a pair of welding gloves, a washing basket and two tins of tuna. Bobbles was a true Harper Girl – full of attitude and very funny.

She travelled with us on our life journey from students to middle-aged parents, a happy daily reminder of our Harper days. She lived a comfortable life, but never really lived up to her farm cat mousing heritage, although she did excel at teaching puppies and children their manners.

Polly & Simon.

## What's going on at Harper?

The University will be producing its own publication in 2022, but in the meantime you can visit [www.harper-adams.ac.uk](http://www.harper-adams.ac.uk) to see what the University has been up to.

## Got some news you want to share with ex-Harper students?

Got some news you want to share with ex-Harper students? Brilliant! Let us know and the Harper Adams Club will gladly share the news. Email us at: [theharperadamsclub@gmail.com](mailto:theharperadamsclub@gmail.com)

[www.facebook.com/harperadamsalumni](https://www.facebook.com/harperadamsalumni) or search **The Harper Adams Club**

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